EFFECTING PROCESS IMPROVEMENT- Play Your Part

BethAnn Perkins, RN
Health Consulting Strategies, Inc.

HCS

WHAT IS A PROCESS?

- A series of steps and decision involved in the way work is accomplished.
  - Registering a patient
  - Rooming a patient
  - Scheduling a referral
  - Collecting co-pays, deductibles, and outstanding balances
  - Managing the Diabetic patient
  - Managing patients with chronic pain

HCS

WHAT IS A PROCESS - CONT.?

- Processes can be either simple or complicated
- Processes can involve only a few people or multiple departments
- Who owns processes?
  - Everyone as a stake in one or more processes.
    - Groups of Individuals usually share in and own – the activities which make up a process.
    - The one individual who is ultimately responsible and accountable for the proper working of the process is known as the "process owner".

HCS

WHAT IS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT?

- Making things better
- Setting aside blaming people for problems or failures
- A way of looking at how we can do our work better.
  - Moving beyond the problem-solving approach or trying to fix what's broken – discovering the "root cause" of the difficulty. When this occurs, true change and improvement can occur.

HCS

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS?

- It helps you develop a work environment and job functions that are efficient and more effective in delivering exceptional customer service.
- It is a proposed requirement of the RHC program.

HCS

RHC REQUIREMENT

- §491.11 Quality Assessment and Performance Improvement (QAPI) - CONDITION
  - The RHC must <u>develop</u>, <u>implement</u>, <u>evaluate</u>, and <u>maintain</u> an effective, *ongoing*, *data-driven* quality assessment and performance improvement (QAPI) program. The self-assessment and performance improvement program must be appropriate for the complexity of the RHC's organization and services and focus on maximizing outcomes by improving patient **safety**, **quality of care,** and **patient satisfaction**.

HCS

- The clinic develops program activities to measure either *safety*, *quality of care*, or *patient satisfaction*.
  - Improvement projects must be distinct, and must reflect the scope and complexity of the clinic's services and available resources.

  - The RHC must maintain records on its QAPI program and quality improvement projects.

  - Evidence of the QAPI program activity(ies) and outcome(s) must be available to the surveyor at the time of the survey.

HCS

GETTING STARTED

- Select a Process Improvement Lead
- Changing the organization's culture – "It's not my job", "I just work here", or "It's management's responsibility
- Process improvement requires everyone to become a "fire preventer," rather than a "fire fighter."
- The focus is on improving a process over the long term, not just patching up procedures and work routines as problems occur.

HCS

GETTING STARTED – CONT.

- If you have been putting out fires, set aside the CO_2 bottle and ask these questions:
  - What process should we select for improvement?
  - What resources are required for the improvement effort?
  - Who are the right people to improve the selected process?
  - How do we go about improving the process?

HCS

STEP 1 – SELECT THE PROCESS TO BE IMPROVED

- Identify problem areas and prioritize.
- Start small – let people get familiar with process improvement.
- Determine process boundaries.
  - Example: The process by which co-pay, deductibles, and outstanding balances are collected.
    - *Starting Point* – The patient is informed at the time appointment is made that any co-pays, deductibles, or outstanding balances will be collected prior to being seen.
    - *Stopping Point* – Co-pays, deductibles, and outstanding balances are collected.

HCS

STEP 1 – ESTABLISHING THE PROCESS IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE

- Establish a well-defined process improvement objective.
  - What improvement do we want to accomplish by using a process improvement methodology?
    - Example: The clinic/center collects 5% of all co-pays, deductibles, and outstanding balances at the point-of-service.
      - Objective: The clinic/center will collect 10% of all co-pays, deductibles, and outstanding balances at the point-of-service in 60 days with no delay in the provider's schedule.

HCS

STEP 2 – ORGANIZING THE RIGHT TEAM

- Select people who are closely involved in the process that is being improved.
- Set Ground Rules:
    - Attendance
    - Preparation
    - Participation
    - Courtesy
    - Assignments
    - Focus

HCS

STEP 3 – FLOW CHART THE CURRENT PROCESS

- Members must understand how it works
- Most useful tool is a Flow Chart
- The team assigns one or more members to observed the flow of work through the process

HCS

STEP 3 - CONT.

- Current situation is defined by answering these questions:
  - Does the Flow Chart show exactly how things are done now?
  - If not, what needs to be added or modified to make it an "as-is" picture of the process?
  - Have the workers involved in the process contributed their knowledge of the process steps and their sequence?
  - After gathering this information, is it necessary to rewrite your process improvement objective?

HCS

STEP 4 - SIMPLIFY THE PROCESS AND MAKE CHANGES

- Answer these questions:
  - Can this step be done in parallel with other steps, rather than in sequence?
  - Does this step have to be completed before another can be started, or can two or more steps be performed at the same time?
  - What would happen if this step were eliminated?
  - Would eliminating this step achieve the process improvement objective?
  - Is the step being performed by the appropriate person?

HCS

STEP 4 - CONT.

- Is the step a work-around because of poor training or a safety net inserted to prevent recurrence of a failure?

- Is the step a single repeated action, or is it part of a rework loop which can be eliminated?

- Does the step add value to the product or service produced by the process?

- Update Flow Chart and test the process.

HCS

STEP 5 - IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

- If the simplified Flow Chart does not give you the results you were looking for – you need to look for the root cause – why didn't this work? At what point did the process break down and why?

- Once identified, you work to improve the process.

HCS

STEP 6 - PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE PROCESS CHANGE

- Once root causes are identified, pick one to work on.
- Develop a plan to implement a change in the process to reduce or eliminate the root cause.
  - What steps in the process will be changed?
  - Are there any risks associated with the proposed change?
  - What will the change cost, e.g. time, money, people?
  - What employees will be affected by the change?
  - Who is responsible for implementing the change?
  - How will the implementation be controlled?
  - At what steps in the process will measurements be taken?

HCS

STEP 7 - TEST THE CHANGE AND COLLECT DATA

- If feasible, the change should be implemented on a limited basis before it is applied to the entire organization.
- Did the process improve?
- Did the change in the process eliminated the root cause of the problem?
- Are the data collected in this step closer to the process improvement objective than the baseline data?
- Were the expected results achieved?
- Were there any problems with the plan?

HCS

SPECIAL THANKS TO ~ IDAHO STATE OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

Contact Information:

BethAnn Perkins, RN
Health Consulting Strategies, Inc.
baperkins@healthconsultingstrategies.com
517.627.7841